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CURRENT TOPICS.

"The Sound of them that Weep: A short statement from Shoreditch" is the title of a pamphlet of sixteen pages giving some account of the heroic work which is being done by the Rev. Osborne Jay for the lapsed masses in one of the worst places in London, or indeed, in the world, and making a forcible appeal for help to keep up the fight. The Parish of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch, contains 8,000 people, "packed together in a space which can be walked over one way in four minutes and another in two." It has been called the "Sink of London." "Of this neighbourhood," says The Daily Telegraph, "there can be but one description,—it is horrible." "There can be no hell hereafter," is a common saying of the people there, "we live in it already." Four or five years ago Mr. Osborne Jay was appointed by his bishop to this locality. He had no building or room in which to preach, no church house as a residence, and a very small stipend on which to

live. "A church of some kind he must have, and he somehow found the means to utilize for the purpose a sort of forage-loft over a range of stabling, and reached by a ladder-like stairway, and here he placed chairs and forms and erected some kind of make-shift pulpit and altar with a roped-in space at one end. The women folk seem to have taken somewhat kindly to this improvised church, but it was too select for the male members of the community. These Mr. Jay found himself obliged to catch with guile by hiring a dilapidated cheese-and-bacon warehouse, forming a club room with fire, gaslight and hot coffee at lowest prices, and permitting his parishioners to come on week-day evenings and smoke, sing, play cards, dominoes and bagatelle, and even to have an occasional boxing bout, he only stipulating that they should be orderly, neither curse nor swear, nor gamble for money, nor sing any song of which he disapproved.

Mr. Jay's apparently hopeless enterprise has succeeded marvellously. "At the present time he has a new church, worthy to be so called, and beneath the same roof-tree a common lodging house, which is in every respect exactly what such a place should be; and a gymnasium, and a club room of sufficient capacity to accommodate the average attendance of members, who now number five hundred. The work is still carried on upon the plan that has not been deviated from since its commencement, and although Mr. Jay may not as yet be able to boast that he has entirely altered the character of the locality, there is no denying that he has vastly improved it. As the police authorities willingly attest, many of the organized gangs of thieves have been broken up, and the female portion of the population is now better behaved and gives less trouble." Funds are greatly needed, it appears, to carry on this unique work. As an American paper says, "The bitter cry of this forgotten parish appeals vividly to the consciences of two continents." Any information will be given or funds received by the Rev. Osborne Jay, Holy Trinity Vicarage, Old Nichol St., Shoreditch, E.

No one will be surprised to learn that the United States have a greater railway mileage in proportion to population than any European country, but most persons will be astonished when told that the Eastern and Central States have more railways in proportion to area than Great Britain or France. Such is, however, the fact, according to a statistical bulletin recently issued by the Inter-State Commerce Commission. The capitalization (not the cost) of American railroads is put down at the enormous sum of \$9,800,000,000, equivalent to an average of \$500 for every family in the Union. One fact, most significant of the progress of railway consolidation, is that the number of

independent railway companies was less in 1891 than in 1890, and that forty-two corporations own nearly half the whole mileage of railways in the country. In 1891 the people of the United States paid to the railroads a net revenue of \$346,000,000, or, as The Christian Union points out, "nearly as much as was paid for the support of the State, county, city, and town governments of the whole United States." As the same paper adds, the question how just or how unjust these railroad charges have been depends on how much money is actually invested in them, a thing very difficult, if not impossible, to discover. Of course the capitalization above given includes an enormous quantity of "water."

In point of dignity, ability, and oratorical readiness the speakers at the Board of Trade Banquet would, we dare say, bear comparison with the same number of public and commercial men assembled on such an occasion in any other country. The Government was represented by its best men, while in Mr. Laurier and Sir Oliver Mowat the other political party was also seen to excellent advantage. We have hinted elsewhere that if the Ottawa speakers from His Excellency downwards failed to some extent to keep their speeches free from the party complexion, it was less their fault than their misfortune. Seeing that the burning question just now before the people of Canada is that of the condition of the country, it would have been very difficult to discuss any public question without trenching upon the domain of party. It must always be legitimate for those who are at the head of the State to try to show that the country is reasonably prosperous under their management. If to do this just now, is to talk party politics, it is so only in virtue of the circumstance that the denial of the fact of such prosperity is one of the chief planks of the Opposition platform. At the same time, it must be confessed that the Government orators had a decided advantage over those of the Liberal party in this matter. It could not be out of taste for the Chief Executive and members of his Government to go into argument and statistics to prove that Canada is making rapid strides in manufactures and commerce, but it would have been in decidedly bad taste for Mr. Laurier to have brought forward other arguments and statistics to prove that the country is in a very bad state, and on the way to financial, commercial and political bankruptcy. Under the circumstances probably the keenest thing said at the banquet was Mr. Laurier's prophecy that when the Liberal party comes into power the people will be so prosperous that no figures will be required to prove it to them, but their prosperity will be visible to the naked eye. It would have been difficult to make a more effective retort consistent with the amenities of the occasion.